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ABSTRACT

Lifelong learning and adult education have long been the vehicle for change in the growth and development of the United States. Benjamin Franklin helped to promote the concept of lifelong learning and adult education and perhaps planted a few seeds for a new freedom when he developed the Junto in 1727. The Junto, which met for purposes of inquiry, debate, and personal improvement, lasted for nearly 40 years and eventually became the American Philosophical Society. The Franklin Institute was dedicated to ideals by which Franklin lived--those of promoting useful knowledge, invention, and discovery. The institute and other similar organizations such as the Lowell Institute, Lyceum Movement, Chautauqua, and the University of Chicago's Extension Programs continued to promote education for adults and youth. The Junto is one way to overcome the sense of helplessness experienced by many individuals in today's political "largeness." People can start groups within their communities, neighborhoods, places of employment, and churches for the purposes of self-directed learning in civic and other matters as well as self-improvement. (The narrative is followed by 16 quotations; a list of 18 writings that can provide historical reference and understanding of U.S. political development; a list of 8 historical documents on government in relation to the United States. An appendix provides information on how to develop and promote a junto. Contains 15 references. (YLB)

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ED 378 374

AAACE 1994 Annual
Adult Education
Conference

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Roundtable Discussion

A CALL TO MEETING:
Revitalizing the Franklin Junto

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presented by

Dr. Rodger S. Graham
Vice President and Regional Manager
Institute for Professional Development

Theme

An American Reunion:
Liberty, Learning, and
Leadership

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Nashville, TN

November 4, 1994

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FYI -- With Respect to the
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In today's political climate, change which may affect our lives and freedoms -- often forced upon us by Executive and Congressional action -- means that the electorate as well as educational institutions, businesses and industries need to keep themselves well informed and involved in the political process. Benjamin Franklin, even as a young man, understood the value of a meeting of the minds to discuss, foster, create involvement and cope with change -- and so created the Junto in 1727. One outcome of his Junto (group with a common purpose) was the planting of seeds for ideas that would lend themselves to the forging of a new Nation some 49 years later.

IPD supports and encourages human beings everywhere, to have a "Call to Meeting" -- to foster individual educational growth as well as participate in this valued process required for a republic of, for and by the people to thrive and survive. While IPD supports such a position, this roundtable presentation and its delivery was developed by me specifically for this year's AAACE Conference in an attempt to address all three themes -- Liberty, Learning and Leadership. Juntos can be formed at the local level in any community or neighborhood. Thanks for your interest and participation in this roundtable discussion -- and --

Happy ~~Learning~~,

Rodger

A CALL TO MEETING
Revitalizing the Franklin Junto

Objectives of the Discussion

(A) To propose that Lifelong Learning and Adult Education have long been the vehicle for change in the growth and development of this country.

(B) To understand that Adult Education has long been the vehicle for involving the masses of this Republic with the democratic process / pre- and post-revolution through the use of such informal organizations as Franklin's Junto and some more formalized organizations such as the Lowell Institute and Chautauqua.

(C) To develop and promote the use of the Junto concept within neighborhoods, communities, organizations and towns/cities.

Proposition

Adults who are now frustrated and / or feel unknowledgeable and helpless about our governmental, legislative, and democratic processes at this time can, through the development and use of small discussion/focus groups, educate themselves in these areas of concern and become actively involved as well as more influential in local, state and national politics.

Brief Review of the Adult Education Movement

> Probably no social undertaking ever staked more on the ability of adults to learn than did the founding of this Republic, for the new government could survive only if it succeeded in transforming, in one generation, an entire people from subjects to citizens.... The methods by which this enormous education task was accomplished were informal, unorganized and in a sense, unconscious. (Peters, et al, 1980)

When political change took shape in colonial America, those who sought and pushed for change also sought to educate the masses, typically through writings and speeches. They sought to educate; to help others understand the differences between what did exist in government and what could exist. Benjamin Franklin was one of those 'movers of the masses' and long before a new government was consciously desired in America, he helped to promote the concept of lifelong learning and adult education and perhaps planted a few seeds for a new freedom -- when he developed the Junto in 1727.

As many already know, Benjamin Franklin was a most intelligent and creative individual -- this in spite of the fact that he had less than two years of "formal" schooling. Most of his education came about from reading, writing, spirited discussing (debating), and doing. At 16 years of age, he had even familiarized himself with Locke's -- Concerning Human Understanding.

In 1727, Benjamin Franklin, at the very young age of twenty-one, assembled a "CLUB" for purposes of inquiry, debate and personal improvement. The Junto met on Friday evenings. The members of the Junto included friends and acquaintances who were mostly apprentices like himself at the time, and considered by Franklin to be "Lovers of Reading" (Silverman, 1986, p. x). As Davis (1994) points out, none of the members were formally educated individuals -- they received the educations needed and desired by providing it to themselves. Franklin describes the Junto as follows,

> "The Rules I drew up requir'd that every Member in his Turn should produce one or more queries on any Point of Morals, Politics, or Natural Philosophy, to be discuss'd by the Company, and once in three Months produce & read an Essay of his own Writing on any Subject he pleased. Our Debates were to be under the Direction of a President, and to be conducted in the sincere Spirit of Inquiry after Truth, without Fondness for Dispute, or Desire for Victory ... (Silverman, 1986, p. 65).

The Junto lasted for nearly 40 years and eventually became what was to be known as the American Philosophical Society. If Franklin was not aware of the importance of adult education on a large scale as a young man, he and other statesmen like himself understood its importance as this new country was forming and following the Revolution as well. A prevailing attitude was expressed by statesmen and prominent political figures like Paine and Jefferson. Kidd (1959:142) aptly expressed this prevailing understanding that permeated a new political system,

> A society that neglects education, for all the people of all ages, runs great risk, for action may then be governed by expediency or worse. Education for adults is not just a pleasant conceit; it is an imperative if democracy is to survive.

Long after the new American government was in place, Franklin's ability to keep the movement alive was realized by the founding of an institute dedicated to ideals Franklin lived by; those of promoting useful knowledge, invention and discovery (Knowles, 1977). The Franklin Institute (late 1700's) and other similar organizations such as the Lowell Institute (1836), the Lyceum Movement (1800's), Chautauqua (late 1800's) and the University of Chicago's Extension Programs fostered by William

Rainey Harper (early 1900's) continued to promote adult education as well as education for youth -- on a more formalized basis throughout a developing and sometimes troubled young nation.

Knowles (1977) makes a strong suggestion that strikes as a major theme about the development of adult education in this country. He refers to the forces that helped to include the concept of education within the masses rather than a cultural elite. These forces were a desire for freedom, religious following, the Protestant work ethic and political changes leading to the emerging of a democratic society in colonial America. These forces still remain strong in this country. The times have changed, but not necessarily the ideals. Progress in the development of adult education which continues to move forward with these ever changing times will continue to address issues to meet both present and future challenges.

Current Employment of the Junto Concept

As Mr. Perot so pointed out in the 1992 election campaign, the concept of the "Town Meeting" was widely used as a means for early settlers (1600's onward) to communicate about societal and political concerns. While the concept of an electronic town hall may or may not be put into practice, community members can and do continue to meet to discuss local issues of concern.

It is postulated that while many individuals may be frustrated with government officials and operations at the local, state and federal levels -- they may not be familiar with the roots of our development. This sense of unfamiliarity can lead to feelings of inadequacy concerning ability to cause political impact and consequently, to a withdrawal from the political process. Perhaps more than ever in this century, the citizenry needs to be highly involved rather than removed from this process. The Junto is one way to overcome this sense of helplessness in today's political 'largeness'.

(1) Those individuals -- who would like to further educate themselves on the philosophical roots of the founding of this nation and how this philosophy is every bit as vital to our livelihood today -- can employ the concept of the Junto within their own communities.

(2) By employing Franklin's structure and rules as outlined above, people can start groups within their communities, neighborhoods, places of employ, churches and other civic organizations -- for the purposes of self directed learning in civic and other matters as well as self-improvement.

(3) The Junto concept can be employed for far more than socio / political education. The choices are limited only by ones imagination and as Franklin pointed out in his Autobiography, by choosing topics of personal interest to study and discuss, one's imagination is opened to new horizons as boundaries are removed. While your Junto can focus on any interests the "Company" may elect to employ, the purpose of this workshop is to present some ideas on promoting some political education and involvement. And so the following is presented for your consideration:

Some Relationships -- Between People and Their Ideas

* Aristotle * Magna Carta * John Locke *
* Voltaire * Benjamin Franklin * Samuel Adams *
* Patrick Henry * Adam Smith * Thomas Paine * John Adams *
* Thomas Jefferson * George Washington * James Madison *

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"If liberty and equality, as is thought of by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons share alike in the government to the utmost." -- Aristotle from Politics, Part IV. (eds. Morley and Everett, 1944.)

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"No free man shall be taken or imprisoned or dispossessed, or outlawed or exiled, or in any way destroyed, nor will we go upon him, nor will we send against him except by lawful judgement of his peers or by the law of the land." -- "Magna Carta" -- 1215. (Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, 1980.)

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"The reason why men enter into society is the preservation of their property; and the end while they choose and authorize a legislative is that there may be laws made, and rules set, as guards and fences to the properties of all the society, to limit power and moderate the dominion of every part and member of society." -- J. Locke, from "Concerning Civil Government: Second Essay" -- 1690. (ed. Hutchins, 1952)

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"I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." -- Voltaire, Attr. in S.G. Tallentyre, The Friends of Voltaire (1907), p. 199. (Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, 1980.)

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"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." -- B. Franklin, "Historical Review of Pennsylvania" -- November, 1755. (eds. Morley and Everett, 1944.)

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"For I truly can have no property in that which another can by right take from me when he pleases, against my consent. . . . If therefore the preservation of property is the very END of government, we are deprived of that for which government itself is instituted." -- S. Adams, from "The Rights of the American Colonists", in the Boston Gazette, -- December 23, 1771. (ed. Hunt, 1993.)

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"Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?" -- P. Henry in his speech in Virginia Convention, St. John's Episcopal Church, Richmond, VA -- March 23, 1775. (eds. Morley and Everett, 1944.)

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"We must carefully distinguish between the effects of the colony trade and those of the monopoly of that trade. The former are always and necessarily beneficial; the latter always and necessarily hurtful." -- A. Smith, An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, 1776 (ed. Hutchins, 1952.)

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"There is no art which one government sooner learns of another than that of draining money from the pockets of the people." -- A. Smith, An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, 1776 (ed. Hutchins, 1952.)

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"In short, INDEPENDENCE is the only bond that can tie and keep us together." -- T. Paine, from Common Sense -- 1776. (ed. Hunt, 1993.)

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"A resolution was passed without one dissenting colony, that those United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states." -- John Adams in a letter to Mrs. Adams -- July 3, 1776. (eds. Morley and Everett, 1944.)

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"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with inherent and inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness: ... -- T. Jefferson, from the Final Draft of the "Declaration of Independence" -- July 4, 1776. (ed. Peterson, 1984.)
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Some Works by Benjamin Franklin:

* Father Abraham's Sermon, 1758.
* Autobiography, 1771.
* An Address to the Public; From the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting an Abolition to Slavery, 1789.

Work by Adam Smith:

* Wealth of Nations, 1776

Some Works by Thomas Jefferson:

* The Declaration of Independence, 1776
* Notes on Virginia, 1781
* Autobiography, 1821

Some Works by Thomas Paine:

* Common Sense, 1776
* The Crisis, 1777
* The Rights of Man, 1791

Some Works by James Madison:

* The Federalist, 1787 -- (Also contributed to by Alexander Hamilton and John Jay.)
* The Virginia Resolutions, 1798

Some Works by John Stuart Mill:

* On Liberty, 1859
* Representative Government, 1861

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Some Historical Documents on Government in Relation to the U.S.

Magna Carta, 1215
The English Bill of Rights, 1689
The Virginia Declaration of Rights, June 1776
The Declaration of Independence, July 1776
The Articles of Confederation, 1783
The Constitution of The United States, 1787
The Federalist, (a.k.a.-- the Federalist Papers), 1787-1788
Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, 1789
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APPENDIX

Ways to Develop and Promote A Junto

(1) Develop a flyer for posting or an advertisement explaining what is wanted and for what purpose. Example --

> Interested Self-Directed Learner wishes to create a study group for the purposes of educational self-improvement. This study group would follow a design similar to one Benjamin Franklin developed for sincere inquiry into subjects of interest. The initial purpose for calling for the formation of this group is to explore writings of the Founding Fathers and the new Government They helped to create and shape (or understanding our political system and process or whatever YOUR interests might be -- you wish to attract others to your group with like interests for purposes of inquiry and exploration).
>
> The group will be made up of no more than "X" members (recommend 6 to 8) and will meet one evening per month for two (or three -- you decide) hours. All those who are interested, please call (or write or be present for an initial meeting at...).

Make the point clear that inquiry and learning are the main purposes for the group's formation. If you are wishing to explore the nature of our government and become educated in our political process you may not wish to meet necessarily for purposes of political action (although that may be a future outcome of the group).

You also determine the make-up of the group you wish to develop. This can relate to age, sex, etc.

(2) Where to post or advertise?

(A) City or Community: local newspaper (create a section on Educational Interests / Pursuits -- do not place in 'personals' or 'lonelyhearts' section) or library bulletin board or local grocery store bulletin boards.

(B) Neighborhood: place flyers in mailbox or announce in community / homeowners newsletters or post on local grocery store bulletin boards.

(C) Church or Synagogue or Temple: post on announcement bulletin boards -- invite to an after service discussion.

(D) Work: post on bulletin board in lunchroom or announce in company newsletter.

(E) Other Civic or Professional or Helping Organizations: announce in organizational newsletters or verbally announce interest while discussing "other business".

(3) **When starting new groups, you may need to build in efforts for security** -- unless you already know the members -- which may be the case at church or work, for example. Therefore, it may be best to meet with your new group at a neutral meeting place -- such as a church or library meeting room. After several months of working together and getting to know each other, you then may wish to meet in your homes on a rotational basis.

You set the rules for the initial meeting in the flyer or advertisement and at your first meeting, you lead the group in developing rules for the group. (If more than 8 people show up -- you can suggest that more than one group be developed. You want meeting times to be manageable so all can participate during the course of the evening.)

(4) **Rules as developed by Franklin for his Junto:**

(A) On a rotational basis -- members are to produce one or more queries on any point of interest in the areas of:

1) Morals
2) Politics
3) Philosophy
4) Economic Education
5) Social / Personal Responsibilities
6) Other(s)?

(B) Once every three months, a member is to produce and read an essay in his / her own writing on any subject desired.

(C) Some Rules to Consider Employing:

1) These queries and readings are to reflect a sincere spirit of inquiry after truth and are intended to promote discussion.

2) Discussions may be lively and debated but the point is not to argue or promote argument nor is the point to desire winning the issue / debate, etc.

3) **The point is** to provoke discussion and thinking and possibly some conclusions -- which may be individually and / or collectively drawn.

4) Whoever takes the turn at hosting the monthly meeting should be the one who enforces the rules set by the group members -- including announcing when the "spirit" of debate needs more control.

Franklin's group had a president of the group and members took turns in that role. The president hosted and controlled the activities of the meeting for the period of time designated -- usually one year's time. **Have Some Fun and Happy Learning!!**